

Written testimony for presentation on March 19, 2002, by Joe Finley.

We must have a memorial dedicated to all the victims of terrorism. There are important reasons: duty..... honor..... freedom. These things are at the very core of every American.

As a firefighter, I am bound by my oath of office to do my duty. I freely accepted that responsibility. I have made a **pledge** I swore to uphold. It is a duty I have to my fellowman, even at the risk of supreme sacrifice. We lost nine men from our firehouse September 11th. They were among the 343 firefighters who gave their lives as heroes, putting themselves in harms way to save their fellowman. They were also victims of terrorism.

Prior to that tragic day the greatest loss of firefighters at any one time in the entire United States was in 1966..... when 12 firemen lost their lives in the 23rd Street Fire in Manhattan. My father, Lieutenant John Finley, was one of them. I was 10 years old.

We all have made a **pledge** to each other as Americans. It is stated in one sentence. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all. That simple pledge is why the terrorists attacked us on September 11th. They despise our republic, they want us to abandon our freedom of religion, give up our liberty, they want us divided and scattered, they hate our justice and the inalienable rights endowed upon us by our Creator, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is our duty to educate the future generations of American so that they can learn from our mistakes, so that we never let down our guard down again. **We must never forget.** There is no closure; we must not forget our loved ones.

We were attacked by fanatics who want to destroy all Americans. It doesn't matter what that cult of evil stole from us that terrible day it's what we do with what is left that counts. They tried to steal our freedom, the very thing that makes America great. We can not let that happen. We need to honor our dear ones. It is our sacred duty. They were murdered simply because they were Americans. They died for our freedom. Our ideals were attacked on 9/11. This memorial is for us as well. There, but for the grace of God go I. The victims must be remembered in a dignified way with a memorial that honors their sacrifice for our freedom.

People have been asking me, what can we do to help. They want to feel connected. I witnessed something incredible after 9/11. I was never prouder to be an American. All the politicians disappeared and in their place stood statesmen, people proudly and defiantly displayed their American flags, they were everywhere. Our churches were filled. People volunteered in any way they could. In New York City and across the country lines stretched out on to the sidewalks with people waiting to give blood. Trucks were filled with supplies and driven toward New York City, without being asked, without a final destination, they arrived and the volunteers asked where can we give this where it will do the most good. There are volunteers at the site of the Twin Towers right now and they have been there 24 hours a day 7 days a week since the attack. We have been left with a great legacy of courage, faith, hope, and love.

There is a plaque for my father and each of the men our firehouse lost in the line of duty since 1865. There are 15 of them; we are going to have to add 9 more after September 11th. I know how important it is that we never forget our loved ones, our heroes. We need to keep the legacy alive. It was left to us by all those who died at the hands of terrorists. It is our responsibility to foster that legacy, and nurture it and make sure it is **never** forgotten.

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